

The Roosevelt Boys Start Coffee Houses

By H. H. STODDARD



KERMIT ROOSEVELT AND FAMILY

While traveling in South America Kermit got the idea of a chain of American coffee houses, which the Roosevelt family will now try to establish.

SIX members of the Roosevelt family have successfully launched a "coffee house" enterprise which they hope to speedily extend throughout the country. There has been nothing quite like this coffee house in existence since the famous old coffee houses of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Under the name of "Brazilian Coffee House," the first was opened to the public of New York about the middle of November, but the public was not aware that the Roosevelt family was behind this enterprise until the last of the month. The owners and incorporators are Lieut.-Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr., Major Kermit Roosevelt, Capt. Archibald Roosevelt, sons of the late Colonel Roosevelt, Dr. Richard Derby, brother-in-law of the Roosevelt brothers, and Capt. Philip J. Roosevelt, their cousin. Mrs. Derby is also one of the stockholders.

The idea of a string or chain of such coffee houses originated with Kermit Roosevelt before the war, as explained by Mr. Philip Roosevelt. "My cousin, Kermit," he said, "was in Brazil during 1912 and 1913. It was due to his stay in South America that the plan was planted in his mind. When he went to Buenos Aires there was not a coffee house in the city. By the time he left there were seventy-five. This sudden growth caused him to look upon the coffee house as something worth while, and although he tucked the idea away in the back of his mind to give place to sterner thoughts during the war, he did not forget it.

"After the war he met A. M. Salazar, a young Brazilian of New York, connected with the office of the Brazilian Consulate General. Having met the young man previously in Brazil, he was renewing acquaintance and learned that Mr. Salazar had opened a small coffee room in the downtown financial district of New York, where he served what he called 'real coffee.' Now you know, as well as I, that there is no such thing as good coffee in New York. The best hotels and smartest restaurants serve indifferent coffee simply because they have not the secret of making it properly.

"With Mr. Salazar we became interested in this proposition and decided to go into the scheme, especially since Kermit was so enthusiastic about it and had reasons to believe that it would be well worth while.

"We have opened our first coffee house at 108 West 44th street and, while starting slowly at first, we intend to branch out and develop this business until in time we shall spread our coffee houses all over the country.

"Prohibition helps in a measure, it is true, but with or without prohibition we intend to go ahead and make a success of the venture. We want to recreate the old and famous English coffee houses as they used to be, a meeting-place for men, and women, too, where a pleasant hour may be spent over a cup or two of steaming coffee. As the Englishman loves his tea, so has the American come to love his cup of coffee. Millions of pounds are sold in this country annually, but never a pound is sold with directions for making good coffee in the proper way. We are serving the best

Brazilian coffee so prepared that it is delicious and much more healthful than when prepared in the ordinary way.

"We do not aim to run restaurants. We serve rolls, sandwiches and pastry and one specially Brazilian dish a day for those who desire a light luncheon with their coffee."

When it became known that the Roosevelts were behind the quaint little coffee house on West 44th street, with its restful brown decorations, its little brown wood tables, with pen, ink and paper at each table, where one might get caught up in correspondence while sipping coffee, crowds flocked to the place and had to wait their turn to be served. Mr. Salazar, who is managing this coffee house, is quite as enthusiastic over it as are the Roosevelts.

"We are most interested in coffee," he told me. "We sell it to drink or by the pound to take home.

The American people do not really know how to appreciate good coffee because they have not had it. They either percolate or boil it and both methods are wrong. We pulverize it and put it in a special strainer, pouring the boiling water through it; then the coffee is instantly ready. Any other method leaves the coffee

full of caffeine, which is poisonous. Again, a great fault with American coffee is that it is not roasted sufficiently. This causes the coffee to give indigestion.

"The coffee house figures largely, and not infrequently, in an interesting and romantic manner in English literature. Lloyds, the great British insurance house, owes its existence to the coffee house, and from 1659, when the first one was opened in London, until with changed times and manners these places dropped into disuse, the coffee house has stood out as a feature of English life, just as the Messrs. Roosevelt hope to make it a feature of American life from now on.

"Steel, Addison, Dryden, Pope and other such celebrities drank their coffee at the historic 'Buttons Coffee House' where that famous highwayman, Jimmie Maclane, met them as friends and equals. I am sure that the Messrs. Roosevelt are establishing something that will live and grow and become a part of American life."

It is the hope, and belief, of the founders of this coffee house that as these places increase and spread, they will be appreciated as they were in early English life, that they will be used as a meeting-place of kindred spirits, that merchants, business men, men of letters and people in all walks of life, from commerce to the arts, will use them as they were used in London in the seventeenth century.

There is nothing of the so-called Bohemian about it, nor is it intended to be. Greenwich village can handle that phase of life without envy or rivalry. Already groups of artists, of writers, of theatrical people and of business men and women have met at the tables in this "Brazilian Coffee House," which New Yorkers persist in calling the "Roosevelt Coffee House." They have found "atmosphere" here, of the right sort, quaint, quiet, friendly, such as Shakespeare and Voltaire both sang about.

The Roosevelts have established business headquarters and are already increasing their importations and planning for the opening of more and more coffee houses, not only in New York City, but in all large and medium sized cities throughout the country.



THEODORE ROOSEVELT, JR., AND FAMILY

He has gone into the coffee house business with his brothers and other relatives.